

The Glasgow Keelie

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CULTURE CLASH

THEY CALL THEM the Bisto Kids. All the frauds, hucksters, comic singers and chancers who have jumped on the culture city gravy train.

The whole sorry saga has been dubbed 'a jamboree for the bourgeoisie'. And one thing's for sure: these characters wouldn't recognise genuine Glasgow culture if it came up and challenged them to a square go.

The hidden agenda of Culture Year is of course to make the city safe for yuppies and investors, and keep the workers safely out of sight.

They've already started by trying to kick the homeless and their soup kitchens out of George Square in case they offend the genteel tourists.

WE SAY THAT ANY CULTURE THAT IS NOT DRIVEN BY SOCIAL JUSTICE IS A SICK, SHALLOW AND WORTHLESS CULTURE.

But thankfully there is a force in Glasgow that does not share the values of war profiteer William Burrell, or the cynical manipulators of George Square and Strathclyde Region. That force is the working class.

This year has seen all that's positive in our culture come to the fore in the shape of the Pay No Poll Tax campaign – the traditions of direct democracy and mass refusal. The tradition that says 'Stuff the law, we want justice'.

IT IS THIS CITY OF DEFIANCE THAT IS THE TRUE FACE OF GLASGOW 1990.

Get the strength of the anti-poll tax groups around you



• Kicked out for culture? Homeless in George Square.

Advert

CELEBRATE

GLASGOW: THE WORKERS CITY

**Tues 1st May
7.30pm**

**Winter Gardens
People's Palace
Glasgow Green**

**with: Freddie Anderson
Farquhar McLay ★ Gordeanna
McCulloch ★ Clutha ★ Jack
Withers ★ plus the launch of a
book on the women weavers of
Bridgeton 'The Last Threads' by
Ann Kerr
Speaker from the Anti-Poll Tax
Campaign
Admission free ★ Tickets from
Scotia Bar, Stockwell St;
Glydeside Press, 37 High St.**

GLASGOW 1990

The shameless endorsement of greed

by Farquhar McLay

Never before has there been so much talk about civilisation and culture as today – today when it is life itself which is disappearing. And there is a strange parallel between the general collapse of life . . . and this obsession with a culture which has never coincided with life, and which is designed to domineer over life.

Artaud

SERIOUS ART AND writing in the City of Culture has taken some fatal knocks. There is a poisonous something in the air, something very unpleasant and immediately perceptible, if not exactly easy to identify precisely. At least not at first, with so many pollutants in the atmosphere. This poisonous something is seldom mentioned in the papers. Nobody likes to draw attention to it in public: those who do are usually put down as spoil-sports and whingers – the latest Saatchi & Saatchi euphemisms for trouble-makers and subversives.

For the festival director, Bob Palmer, and for the leader of the council, Pat Lally, the air is not only safe but positively beneficial. It is only a matter of becoming acclimatised. Writers and artists are invited to gulp it down greedily. A great many do, some holding their noses. That can be quite comical. Mr Lally says it is good for them. He says it is good for everybody, and especially the masses. Even if the cost hurts, rejoice! When it hurts it is doing most good. Mr Lally is a philanthropist in the Thatcher mould. When he is doing you most good the pain is excruciating. He will make Glasgow a Florence on the Clyde! The people will prosper. Anybody claiming otherwise is a traitor. It has become unpatriotic, as well as unseemly, to mention the smell. It is mischief-making even to hint at its origin. So most people stay tight-lipped

and suffer it, just hoping for the best.

If anything, as the year progresses the poisonous effluvia has only worsened. There are enclaves where the air is particularly noxious. And not all are convinced it is safe. Some to escape the nausea have skipped town. Some have even fled the country. The rest of us have to make do with trying to avoid those terrible places where the disgusting miasma is known to be at its sickliest – like in the arches beneath Central Station, or in Waterstone's Bookshop, or at the Fine Arts Society and certain other prestigious galleries, concert halls, tram depots and theatres (like the Citz) too numerous to mention. In fact some people think the only safe course is to go home and get drunk.

For the truth is: the Year of Culture has more to do with power politics than culture. It has more to do with millionaire developers than art. Hence the almighty stench.

For writers and artists in 1990 it is no longer a question of weighing up how much or how little autonomy/integrity to surrender for the sake of the grants or state subsidies or business sponsorship that might be won.

In 1990, willy-nilly, everything is surrendered, once you join in the enterprise, for above all 1990 makes an unequivocal statement on behalf of corporate wealth. So that in 1990 it is more a question of art sponsoring big business, promoting the new tourist drive and giving aid and comfort to a shallow ethos of yuppie greed. And for all this of course the people of Glasgow will be made to foot the bill.

At heavy cost to the public purse Glasgow's image is to be overhauled and tarted-up so that financial services can flourish, up-market shopping malls thrive and high-priced luxury flats proliferate to the glory of capitalism. It is the year of the exploitation of art by big business for big business.

In 1990 art is to pave the way for the entrepreneur and the property developer and the great new tourist economy and yuppie culture. That is the deadly fate political toe-rags like Lally & Co have earmarked for Glasgow.

With Saatchi & Saatchi's expert help they

THERE'S
A LOT OF
CON GOWING
ON IN
1990.

Courtesy: The Citizen.

revamp the image and leave the reality untouched. They propagate an image which is false. There is privation and dereliction of the housing schemes, with a third of the whole housing stock officially classed as 'below a tolerable standard' or, as we used to say, perhaps more honestly, 'unfit for human habitation'. There is chronic unemployment and widespread DSS poverty with the usual concomitants – drug abuse and the manifold forms of community violence. This is not the Merchant City, but this is the real Glasgow.

Any image that fails to convey the social deprivation and human waste in Glasgow in 1990 is an insult to the working-class population. But a greater insult is the Year of Culture itself. For the people without hope, it is the final proof, if proof were needed, of Labour's abject collusion with the forces of monopoly capitalism against the social and cultural aspirations and creative spirit of the working class – the final relinquishment of even the pretence to socialist principles.

Of course, if going home and getting drunk were our only option we would indeed be sunk. It may be one can have one's own personal revolution and renounce the shit that is being laid on us from all sides. But that is to be isolated, and to be isolated is to be sterile and, ultimately, acquiescent. A quietest rejection is not enough.

Better to stick our ground and make our protest heard in whatever way we can. Let us at least make certain they know we know the Year of Culture stinks – and why it stinks.

GREEN THREAT

"YOU DON'T consult the frogs when you're draining the swamp." So goes the cynical motto of town planners the world over. And in Glasgow this idea has been put into practice with relish.

Our home-grown bureaucrats, nicknamed 'The

last Stalinist regime in Europe', have bulldozed traditional communities, dumped their inhabitants in distant housing schemes and forced mile after mile of concrete and motorway upon us.

Now they're turning their attention to the area surrounding Glasgow Green. Already they're attempting to demolish Paddy's Market, in spite of protests. Then, after turning the People's Palace into a Blue Peter-type heritage museum, they plan

to build a Disney style theme park.

But the Mickey Mouse minds of George Square are in for a shock. Time and time again, Glaswegians have risen up when the Green – the People's Park – has been under threat. The traditional rallying place for people's power, from the Chartist and anti-slavery demonstrations of the 19th century to the anti-poll tax campaign of today, is an authentic part of Glasgow's working class culture. Any attempt by the Council to construct yet another deodorised yuppie warren will meet with determined opposition.



I'm here as leader of Glasgow Labour Council to unveil this statue of John Maclean, the great revolutionary socialist who gave his all to the working class . . .

. . . of course, nowadays things have changed! In partnership with capitalism your Labour-controlled Council have abolished poverty, homelessness and injustice . . .

BOYCOTT
'GLASGOW'S GLASGOW'
JOIN THE PICKET
against the overpriced,
sanitised, whitewashed and
patronising centrepiece
of yuppie culture year.
SAT 14th APRIL
11am Midland St. off Jamaica St.
BRING A PLACARD